



Environmental Audit Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon George Eustice MP

Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

By Email

10 September 2020

RE: Expansion of UK Offshore wind capacity and disposal of ordinance

Dear George,

As you will know, earlier this year the Environmental Audit Committee held an evidence session looking at the offshore wind sector and the potential role that the sector can play in driving the UK's transition to Net Zero and in creating highly skilled jobs across the country. As part of the session we heard evidence about planned expansion of the UK offshore wind sector and the pipeline of future projects which may yet come on stream. We wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Industrial Strategy to ask a number of questions about the issues raised in the session, and have since received a helpful response from that Department.

Since the session concluded we have been alerted to an issue relating to the disposal of unexploded ordinance (UXO) in UK waters where this is required as part of the construction of new arrays or in order to lay cables to connect new wind farms to the UK grid. Given Defra's oversight of the Marine Management Organisation we would be grateful for a response from you on this specific point.

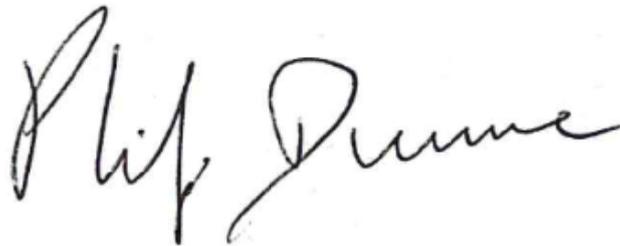
Written evidence submitted to the Committee suggests that the current approach, whereby ordinance is safely detonated in-situ by way of a controlled explosion, can cause significant harm to the local environment and can have wider implications for marine animals in the vicinity, particularly due to the underwater noise caused by explosions.¹ While the regulatory regime governing the use of controlled explosions provides some safeguards for marine life, as technologies continue to develop there may be opportunities to make UXO safe in ways that minimise the harm caused to the environment.

¹ [OSW0038](#)

Given the increased role of offshore wind in the UK's energy mix, which is a welcome development in our transition to net zero, I would be grateful if officials in your Department could set out what assessment has been made of the risk to our marine environment from the increased use of munitions disposal and whether any review of the methods licenced by the Marine Management Organisation is planned in order to ensure that the environmental impact of removed UXO is minimised.

I would appreciate a response by 9 October 2020. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Dunne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon. Philip Dunne MP
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee

cc. Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy